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# Chapter One: Introduction

## The Commission's Mandates and Methods

On October 25, 1991, in a letter to all the parishes of the Archdiocese, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, appointed this Commission (a) to examine four areas of concern in regard to sexual misconduct with children by priests and (b) to make recommendations to him for action. (Cf. Appendix A for the Cardinal's letter, and Appendix B for brief biographies of the Commission members.)

One of our first items of discussion was the appropriateness of Bishop Gorman's membership on the Commission because he is the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Our underlying concern was: Would the Commission have the necessary independence to carry out its mandate? The two lay members thought his membership would be helpful and voted to have Bishop Gorman as a member of the Commission. We felt that his membership would facilitate access to appropriate archdiocesan files, information, and personnel. His background as a clinical psychologist was also an important asset. Moreover, he was outnumbered 2-1 by the laypersons on the Commission. At the same time, he agreed to remove himself immediately from the Advisory Committee to the Vicar for Priests' Office (cf. below) on which he had served for the previous ten months.

As the Cardinal's letter to the parishes pointed out, the first mandate to the Commission was to:

- address, without delay, any situations involving clergy assignments that might put people at risk.

Fr. Patrick O'Malley, Bishop Raymond Goedert, Fr. Robert Kealy, Fr. Andrew McDonagh, Mr. Ralph Bonnacorsi, and Mr. James Serritella gave us the information pertinent to the subject matter which we had been asked to investigate: allegations of sexual misconduct with minors by priests. After reviewing all the cases that were presented to us, we made specific recommendations to Cardinal Bernardin about each of them. Chapter Four of this report provides more details about the results of our work in regard to our first mandate.

The Cardinal gave the Commission three other mandates as well: to

- review the existing policies and procedures of the Archdiocese relative to sexual misconduct by clergy, with special attention to the issue of child sexual abuse;

- address the question of whether and under what circumstances a priest — against whom accusations of sexual misconduct have been lodged — could engage in parish ministry;
- present recommendations about how the Archdiocese might best incorporate laypersons into its review process.

After the initial review of specific cases, the Commission began to carry out these mandates in three ways: an extensive series of interviews, reading the research and literature on the various dimensions of the issue, and a request for written input from interested persons throughout the Archdiocese. All three sources of information helped shape our deliberations and this Report. We are very grateful to all who shared their expertise, experience, and views with us.

**Interviews.** We conducted 31 interviews (four by conference telephone calls) with a total of 41 individuals. These interviews ranged from one to six hours each. Appendix C contains the names of the persons we interviewed and brief summaries of the discussions. These persons included (a) experts in the fields of psychiatry and psychology with considerable experience in the diagnosis and treatment of both offenders and victims, as well as experts in the fields of law and law enforcement; (b) adult victims of child sexual abuse by priests and a victim's parent; (c) past and present archdiocesan personnel who could throw light on past policies and procedures and offer insights into what needs to be improved; and (d) representatives of the three archdiocesan seminaries which prepare candidates for the priesthood.

**Research/Literature.** Several of the persons we interviewed submitted or recommended articles or books that would be helpful to our work. In addition, we asked certain experts to review our bibliography and suggest anything else that would be very helpful in carrying out our mandate. Appendix D contains the bibliography which we used in preparing this Report.

**Written Input.** In mid-January, we requested written comments from concerned laity and clergy and other interested persons in regard to our three remaining mandates. We sent an announcement to all the pastors in the Archdiocese with the request that it be published in the parish bulletin for two

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consecutive weekends. (Cf. Appendix E for a copy of the letter and the announcement). We sent similar requests to the presidents of the nine local Catholic colleges and universities in the Archdiocese, the presidents or administrators of the 22 Catholic hospitals here, the principals of the 50 Catholic high schools, as well as the directors of five archdiocesan institutions specializing in child care: Catholic Charities, the Maryville Academy, Misericordia North and South, and Mercy Boys' Home. The request was also published in the January 25, 1991, issue of *The New World*, the archdiocesan newspaper.

The Commission received 184 letters. Each of us personally read all of the letters, including those that were anonymous, and took the various comments into consideration in our deliberations. At our request, our secretary sent a brief acknowledgment to each letter writer who had included an address and, later, asked the correspondents' permission to list their names in an appendix. Appendix F contains the names of those who gave us permission to list their names.

**Schedule.** The Commission held some full-day sessions and usually met twice a week. Appendix G

lists the Commission's schedule of meetings. In addition, each of us invested considerable personal time in reading the research and literature we accumulated and reviewing the extensive written summaries of our interviews and discussions. We also met regularly with Cardinal Bernardin to review how he and other archdiocesan personnel were implementing the recommendations we had made in regard to the cases we reviewed, as well as to make further recommendations about cases since the initial review of last Fall.

We invested considerable time and energy in this endeavor because we recognized its importance for the victims, the Church, and society as a whole. At the same time, we realized that the study of the causes, treatment, and prevention of this problem could continue for years, and we needed to bring our deliberations to closure at this time. It is vital, however, that the study, education, and discussion continue at all levels of the Archdiocese. As we learn more about the phenomenon of child sexual abuse, we will be better prepared to respond to it with both compassion and competence.